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First regular session of 1994

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 4th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 16 February 1994, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. SERSALE de CERISANO (Argentina)
(Vice-President)

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In the absence of Mr. Ansari (India),
Mr. Sersale de Cerisano (Argentina),
Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

ORGANIZATION OF THE WORK OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD (continued)

Sessions of 1994, briefings and field visits

1. Mr. GRAISSE (Secretary of the Executive Board) said that the dates proposed by the Bureau for field visits to Viet Nam, the Philippines, the occupied Palestinian territories and Jordan were 25 April to 6 May 1994. There was a possibility of a further visit to two African countries in August 1994. In accordance with the procedure adopted in 1993, all candidates for field visits were to submit their credentials to the Bureau, which would review the requests on the basis of the available space.

2. Mr. GUERRERO (Philippines) said that his delegation would be grateful if no visit could be scheduled for the week of 2 to 6 May 1994, as a meeting of newly restored or emerging democracies was to be held during that week in a Central American country, and he doubted whether senior officials of his Government would be available to hold meetings with the Board's delegation.

3. Mr. GRAISSE (Secretary of the Executive Board) said that it would be difficult to change the dates of the field visits, as meetings were scheduled during each of the weeks leading up to June. He suggested that the weeks allotted for visits to Viet Nam and the Philippines should be switched.

4. Mr. ACHA (Peru) requested clarification concerning two matters. First, his country's Permanent Mission to the United Nations had submitted to the Bureau the names of its candidates for the field visits, in response to the invitation which it had received in 1993 from the Bureau of the Governing Council. He wondered whether it would be necessary for the Mission to submit a new application in view of the Council's transformation into the Executive Board. Secondly, at the previous session, a discussion had been held on the basis of document DP/1993/21 concerning the methodology for the allocation of resources for the sixth programming cycle. The Council, in its decision 93/24, had requested the Administrator to continue consultations on the subject, including at the current session, with a view to submitting a conceptual paper on issues relating to the sixth cycle at the forty-first session. However, if the matter was not to be taken up at the current session, as the agenda seemed to indicate, it would need to be discussed in May, as that was the last opportunity prior to the annual session.

5. The PRESIDENT, replying to the Peruvian representative's first question, said that, once the Bureau had decided on the composition of the field delegation, the secretariat would send requests for further information on the candidates to all the countries concerned. Secondly, the question of following up Council decision 93/24 would be dealt with in the report of the Administrator. A document was in preparation by the secretariat, which would be circulated as DP/1994/20, and the Bureau was also considering the possibility of holding informal consultations on the issue.

6. Mr. DIECKERT (Germany) said that, while field visits were very useful, the results of the current discussion of the future of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) must be taken into account in the design of such visits.

7. Mr. BARNETT (United Kingdom) said that, for the past 18 months, the Council, now the Board, had been bedevilled by the question under consideration. Scheduling must be left to the Bureau; otherwise, the Board would become involved in micromanagement.

8. The PRESIDENT suggested that the Bureau should hold further consultations.

Rules of procedure

9. The PRESIDENT drew attention to two working papers which were before the members of the Board, namely, the rules of procedure of the Governing Council, and a document entitled "Elements for provisional rules of procedure of the Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA".

10. Mr. GRAISSE (Secretary of the Executive Board) said that, in the second paper to which the President had referred, the Bureau had presented a preliminary version of the draft rules of procedure which would be submitted to the Board for consideration and adoption in June. The Council's rules of procedure were not very detailed; at the previous six sessions of the Council, there had never been a need to refer to them.

11. Mr. PEDERSEN (Denmark) said that the paper was very useful; he noted with appreciation that the source from which each paragraph had been taken was indicated.

12. Ms. DOWSETT (New Zealand) said it was her understanding that the paper represented an indicative list of issues to be addressed, rather than a preliminary draft.

13. Mr. GRAISSE (Secretary of the Executive Board) confirmed the previous speaker's understanding.

14. Mr. BARNETT (United Kingdom), supported by Mr. DIECKERT (Germany), said that, while his delegation had no difficulties with the paper, it would clearly cause problems for other delegations; the question of the venue for the Board's meetings would need to be addressed at the May session.

15. Ms. DOWSETT (New Zealand) said that the final paragraph of the section entitled "Sessions", which referred to annual sessions being held alternately at United Nations Headquarters and at the United Nations Office at Geneva, should be deleted, in accordance with the decision taken by the Council in 1993 to give further consideration to the matter.

16. Mr. CLAVIJO (Colombia) said that he agreed with the representative of New Zealand.

17. Mr. MONROE (United States of America) said that the broad array of views on the issue should be taken into account.

18. Mr. GUERRERO (Philippines) said that it would be useful to know whether General Assembly resolution 48/162 stated explicitly that regular sessions of the Board should be held at the headquarters of UNDP/UNFPA as of the date when such premises were rendered possible to accommodate such meetings.

19. Mr. PASHA (Pakistan), supported by Mr. CABEIRO-QUINTANA (Cuba), said that significant deletions had been made in the provisional rules of procedure, as compared to those of the Governing Council, and that they deserved careful consideration. He proposed that the new rules of procedure be discussed at the regular session of the Executive Board in May 1994.

20. Mr. EIDHAMMER (Norway) said that while he supported that proposal, he believed that a general exchange of views regarding the working methods and procedures of the Executive Board at the current session would also be beneficial.

21. Ms. VOLKOFF (Canada), supported by Mr. EIDHAMMER (Norway), suggested that those items requiring general discussion could be considered at the current session, in particular the issues of sessional bodies and subsidiary organs, languages, records and participation of non-members. Following the general discussion, members could submit written recommendations to the secretariat for discussion during the May 1994 session.

22. Mr. MONROE (United States of America), agreeing with the representative of Canada, said that while some issues were sensitive and required additional consideration in capitals, he hoped that the May session would not be spent dissecting the rules of procedure and proposed that the Committee proceed with a general discussion of some of the difficult issues at its current session.

23. Mr. ROBLES (Observer for Mexico) and Mr. GUERRERO (Philippines) supported the proposal of the representative of Canada.

24. Mr. BABA (Observer for Uganda) said that the new Executive Board should define its rules of procedure as soon as possible. He therefore proposed that discussion of the rules of procedure should be postponed until the following day, rather than waiting until the May 1994 session.

25. Mr. YAO Wenlong (China), supporting the views of the representatives of Pakistan and Cuba, suggested that the secretariat organize informal meetings to discuss the provisional rules of procedure prior to the May session.

26. Mr. BARNETT (United Kingdom) said that since rules 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13 and 14 repeated the previous rules word for word, except that "Governing Council" had been replaced by "Executive Board", he proposed that they be discussed only if a member specifically raised them. The other rules pertaining to issues of language and observers should be scrutinized in greater detail.

27. Ms. RIBEIRO-VANDERAUWERA (Belgium) said that members of the Board and observers had had a chance to voice their views on several topics at the previous meeting. She agreed that only those items about which there was some disagreement should be discussed.

28. Mr. PASHA (Pakistan) said that although the rules of procedure were not often invoked, they were important and deserved careful consideration. If the Executive Board wished to postpone consideration of the rules of procedure until the May 1994 session, then any changes in their provisions could be discussed in the regional groups, at the current session. Those issues which representatives wished to discuss with their capitals could be taken up subsequently.

29. Ms. DOWSETT (New Zealand), Mr. JONG (Observer for the Netherlands), speaking also on behalf of Switzerland, and Mr. HORIGUCHI (Japan) endorsed the proposal of the representative of Canada with regard to rules 5, 7, 9 and 12.

30. The PRESIDENT said that in order to expedite consideration of the matter at the May session, the secretariat had sought members' initial reactions to the provisional rules of procedure. Endorsing the suggestion of the representative of Uganda, he proposed that the Board resume discussion of the rules of procedure at its meeting on 18 February, which would allow members additional time to review the documents before holding a general discussion.

31. Ms. VOLKOFF (Canada) said that there were three possibilities: the Board could continue its discussion at the current meeting, delay all consideration of the rules of procedure until the meeting on 18 February or leave it to those interested to hold informal discussions.

32. Mr. GUERRERO (Philippines) said that the first of those options was not feasible, as most delegations had probably not had sufficient time to read the document. He suggested that the second option of establishing either a small working group or involving the Board as a whole to submit recommendations to the plenary on Friday morning, should be adopted.

33. Mr GRAISSE (Secretary of the Executive Board) said that in the secretariat's paper on elements for provisional rules of procedure, wherever the word "Administrator" appeared, the phrase "and the Executive Director" should be added, as the Executive Board was the governing body of both UNDP and UNFPA.

34. Mr. MONROE (United States of America) said that the rules of procedure per se were not the issue; they parallelled very closely the old rules of the Governing Council and additional sources, as indicated in the secretariat's paper. What was important was how the Board was going to conduct its business in the future. The representative of Canada had identified some issues which the Board would do well to address in the remaining time available, otherwise it might find itself facing the same problem when it took up the matter again the following day.

35. Mr. AMAZIANE (Morocco) said that while his delegation would be interested in hearing preliminary comments from other delegations on the various sections of the secretariat paper, so that when the Board resumed its discussions on Friday, 18 February, it would know how to proceed. It would be desirable to start with the second section II, on the agenda; the Board had already identified the problem in section I, namely, alternating the holding of sessions between Geneva and New York.

36. Mr. RÖHNER (Observer for Switzerland), supported by Mr. AMAZIANE (Morocco), suggested that informal consultations should be held, presided over by the President.

37. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.